

The Wild Stock Restoration Initiative

The tribes and state fish and wildlife managers created the Wild Stock Restoration Initiative (WSRI) in 1991 in response to wild salmon and steelhead stock concerns and the anticipated filing of Endangered Species Act petitions for many of those populations. The following general approach was established to address wild stock status and recovery:

- ◆ Inventory status of stocks;
- ◆ Review goals and objectives;
- ◆ Review management strategies (harvest, habitat and hatcheries);
- ◆ Develop recovery and management plans; and
- ◆ Monitoring and evaluation.

Salmon and Steelhead Stock Inventory

The first step in the Wild Stock Restoration Initiative — a statewide inventory of all salmon and steelhead stocks and their status — was begun in the spring of 1992. It took about one year to complete the Salmon and Steelhead Stock Inventory (SASSI), and another 18 months to complete the detailed appendices which provide the data and information used in the evaluation of stock status.

SASSI grouped Washington's 435 salmon and steelhead stocks into five status categories. Of the total, 187 stocks were categorized as healthy; 122 depressed; 12 critical; 113 unknown; and one extinct. SASSI will be periodically updated and revised to reflect changes in stock status gathered through monitoring and evaluation.

While compiling the SASSI document, it became apparent to the tribes and WDFW that it would be impossible to adequately assess salmon and steelhead habitat within the scope of the stock inventory. Because freshwater habitat is a basic limiting factor for the production of some salmon species, it was clear that an inventory of salmon and steelhead habitat must also be compiled.

Salmon and Steelhead Habitat Inventory and Analysis

Work on the second step in the Wild Stock Restoration Initiative — the Salmon and Steelhead Habitat Inventory and Analysis Project (SASHIAP) — began recently and is expected to be completed by 1997. Tribal participation in the first phase of this effort is being funded through a \$400,000 congressional appropriation.

The SASHIAP project will ultimately result in a blueprint for joint tribal/state cooperative action to document current habitat conditions, assess the role of habitat degradation and loss in the condition of salmon and steelhead stocks, develop stock- or watershed-specific strategies for habitat protection and restoration, and define a cooperative process to implement habitat restoration and protection strategies.

Timeline

Because of the need for quick action to reverse the decline of wild salmon and steelhead stocks, SASHIAP will be conducted over 12- to 18-month period and will utilize existing information. An initial habitat inventory base was expected to be completed in December. Efforts to add and finalize this part of the project will be ongoing throughout the life of the project. The completed assessment of habitat as it relates to the status of salmon and steelhead stocks will be available by July 1997. Like SASSI, the SASHIAP must be viewed as an ongoing process, not a one-time effort. Continued funding will therefore be necessary to support the project beyond the two-year initial effort.